

***Testimony of Melody A. Currey  
Commissioner of Motor Vehicles  
Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee  
Date: TBD***

# ***Draft***

Good afternoon/morning Chairs Janowski and Looney, Ranking members Piscopo and Fasano and Distinguished Members of the Executive and Legislative Committee. My name is Melody Currey and I am deeply honored and humbled by the trust and confidence Governor Dannel Malloy has placed in me by selecting me to be the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. I am hopeful that, through this hearing process and after making your own independent evaluation of my qualifications, you will see fit to recommend my nomination to the House of Representatives.

I was born in Margarettsville, New York and spent the earliest years of my life in Downsville, New York, a small town of 800 people. Upon my parents divorce, my mother and I relocated to Delmar, New York, a suburb of Albany, New York, where my mother was the Revision Clerk of the New York State Legislature. I graduated from Bethlehem Senior Central High School with a Regents Diploma and then attended SUNY at Cobleskill where I majored in Business Administration.

I met my future husband, Don in 1969, and we were married in 1971. At that time he was in the US Air Force and we lived in Portsmouth, New Hampshire and later in Anchorage, Alaska. Upon leaving the military we settled in Rennselear, New York while Don was going to school. He went to work for a medical supply firm and subsequently was transferred to Hartford, Connecticut. We relocated to East Hartford in 1978, and decided to make East Hartford our permanent home because of East Hartford's diverse population, school system, and the affordability of homes. We have three children, Becky, Jeff and Matt, all homeowners in East Hartford, and four grandchildren, Matt Jr., Devin, Lily and Mariah. Also, both of our mothers have moved from New York to East Hartford.

From 1978 to 1990, I was a "stay at home mom". During those years I served on a variety of PTO's, holding a variety of positions, was a Girl Scout Leader, taught and coordinated CCD, became politically active and served in a variety of positions from District Member to District Chairman. I also was a Team Mom for Little League where the toughest of politics took place.

In 1991, I went to work in the Banks Committee and then to House Democrats as a Legislative Aide. In 1992, I ran for State Representative and with the support from my network of family, friends, and the Democratic team, took office in 1993.

The opportunity to serve the citizens of East Hartford in two different roles over the past eighteen years has been a great privilege and has been the most rewarding experience of my professional life.

As a member of the General Assembly from January of 1993 to December of 2005, I served on a variety of committees: Appropriations, Education, Judiciary, Legislative Management, Higher Education and Technology, Insurance and Real Estate, Housing, and a variety of task forces. In addition, I served as Deputy Majority Leader for four years and as Deputy Speaker for six years and Co-Chaired the Screening Committee for House Democrats nine of those years. Also, I served as the Ranking Member of the Regulation and Review Committee.

As an Insurance Committee Member my freshman year, I, along with two other freshman legislators, was successful in pursuing Auto Insurance Reform to lower the premium rates. Successfully negotiating the original Huskie Program with OPM and the Governor's Office is one of my most satisfying achievements as a Legislator. My experiences in the Legislature from reading legislation, assisting in the drafting, directing the operation of the House Floor, and working directly with leadership in both houses and the Governor's Office will be an asset in my new role as Commissioner.

In 2005, I was elected Mayor of East Hartford, a job I have enjoyed for the past five years. While many communities also employ a town manager, in East Hartford, the Mayor is the CEO as well as the Town Manager. Being Mayor augmented my administrative skills and will prove beneficial as DMV Commissioner. East Hartford's budget is approximately three times that of the Department of Motor Vehicles and has 500 employees while DMV has approximately 750 employees. As you are aware, developing a good working relationship with employees is critical to getting the job done. As Mayor I successfully developed a team concept and will employ similar strategies at the DMV.

During my tenure as Mayor, a number of significant projects were addressed. Cabela's, the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest tourist attraction in Connecticut following the casinos, was stalled when I took office and ready to walk away from Connecticut. It took over a year of negotiations and various meetings with Cabela's, Rentschler Field Development Company, UTC, the Matos Group, OPM, DECD, DOT, CL&P, AT&T, MDC, and East Hartford Town Staff to bring the plan together along with twenty six weeks to bring the building to completion.

For many years prior to my becoming Mayor, roads in East Hartford had not been a priority. While my predecessor did begin to address the matter, I am proud to say upon leaving office over 33% of roads in East Hartford have been improved. The funding to pay for these projects was approved by the voters of

the Town, and being fiscally conservative, I supported ten year bonds, well below the life expectancy of the roads.

Determining that the golf course was operating with a \$150,000 to \$200,000 deficit annually I was able to move our local golf course to a private lease, no longer extending the deficit and generating revenue increase to the Town. This, along with over \$2,000,000 worth of improvements will bring in over the next 20 years a net gain of over \$7,500,000 at zero cost to the taxpayer.

Town Hall was built in 1937, with no major upgrades since the additions of 1968. By cobbling together grant money, LOCIP, bonding, and general funds an elevator will make all of Town Hall handicapped accessible while also removing asbestos, installing energy efficient windows throughout Town Hall along with a new generator and upgrading the entrance to the building. This resulted in energy savings and created a better environment for the employees and taxpayers.

The Town engaged in over \$12,300,000 dollars of Energy Performance Contracts that have allowed the retrofitting of up to date efficiencies all paid for by the money saved in implementing the upgrades and returning more money to the town that it spent.

My second year as Mayor the Federal Government through FEMA and the US Army Corp of Engineers announced that our levee system was in danger of failing and the Town had to immediately begin making corrections in the maintenance and operation of the system. This was a reaction to the disaster caused by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Previously, East Hartford had always received high evaluations on annual Federal inspections so this came as a complete surprise to the community. It also came with a price tag of over \$28,000,000. I proposed a \$7,000,000 bond to begin addressing the levees and the voters supported it. Thanks to the Bond Commission and the General Assembly the Town received another \$7,000,000 in state bonding. There is legislation in Washington that will assist the Town but to date the Town has received zero dollars to "fix it", save \$500,000 in an economic development package to address a retaining wall behind a business area along the levee. Acknowledging problems, analyzing them and seeking logical solutions are the best ways to operate any business or government.

As Mayor of East Hartford I belonged to various organizations and served in a variety of offices: President of Council of Connecticut Municipalities (CCM), Chair of Capitol Region Council of Government (CRCOG), and Vice Chair of Connecticut Coalition of Justice for Educational Funding (CCJEF), Co-Chair of the School Readiness Council, and I serve on the Board of Directors of Riverfront Recapture, and East Hartford ChildPlan. Within our community I also am a member of the Democratic Women's Club and the East Hartford Lions.

In many ways the Department of Motor Vehicles is the face of state government. Customer service is the number one role for government. It is what we are all about; making government work better for the people we serve. Of all the agencies in the State of Connecticut, the Department of Motor Vehicles is one that deals with all walks of life. If you do not require a license you will most likely need photo identification and where do you get that? You come to the DMV.

The mission of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles is to promote and advance public *safety, security and service* through the regulation of drivers, their motor vehicles and certain motor vehicle-related businesses. Continuing the move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century while keeping in mind that customer service is a top priority I look forward to facing the challenges and developing and implementing the necessary changes in how the Department of Motor Vehicles meets its mission.

There are approximately 2.5 million licensed drivers and about 3 million registered motor vehicles in our state. DMV offers its customers 10 full-service branch offices, three satellite offices, which are full-service with limited hours, and three photo-license centers. In addition, DMV teams up with 15 AAA offices to offer driver's license renewals for customer convenience.

However, DMV's customer-base extends beyond driver licensing and vehicle registration. For example:

- DMV licenses and regulates businesses, such as motor vehicle dealers and repair shops;
- DMV, through its Commercial Vehicle Safety Division, is the lead Connecticut state agency for commercial vehicle safety;
- DMV oversees the vehicle emissions testing program to improve Connecticut's air quality;
- DMV oversees Administrative Per Se hearings that could result in license suspensions for operators arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

As Commissioner I have had the distinct pleasure to have met a majority of the employees. It is my sincere goal to have a positive relationship with employees and look forward to their assistance and suggestions to help move the agency forward.

As we look to the future, I want to make this committee aware of two high-priority agency projects. These projects will influence the way DMV conducts its business in the future.

The first is a multi-million dollar, multi-year information technology modernization project. It's called the Connecticut Integrated Vehicle and Licensing System (CIVLS). Simply put, this project will make DMV a true 21<sup>st</sup>-century agency by

improving our customer service offerings, including providing more services over the Internet for our customers and business partners.

This project proposes sweeping changes and improvements to DMV's information technology systems and administrative processes. That means more timely transactions and information. And, the information will be easily available, more reliable and accurate.

The second is the Department's on-going work to comply with the Federal REAL ID Act. This federal mandate will touch every single person in Connecticut with a driver's license or non-driver ID card to ensure that a secure credential is issued to the proper person. Our plan is to be a REAL-ID compliant state and we are working towards that goal.

I welcome the challenge of efficiently meeting DMV's statutory requirements and meeting the needs of Connecticut's residents. In addition, because it will be a team effort, I look forward to working with DMV staff to maximize our resources to be known as a customer-friendly, user-friendly agency.

Thank you for your time and I would welcome any questions you may have.